



The President's Daily Brief

January 29, 1976

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

MOROCCO-ALGERIA

New clashes took place yesterday and today in Spanish Sahara, according to press reports from Algiers and Rabat. A Moroccan communiqué said the fighting was a continuation of Tuesday's battle between Moroccan forces and Algerian troops supporting the Polisario guerrillas.

Rabat and Algiers so far have carefully measured their response to the fighting, but both sides have expressed concern that the situation could get out of control.

Following Algerian President Boumediene's contacts with several Arab leaders, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq have begun preliminary mediation efforts with Moroccan King Hassan and the Algerian President.

Morocco, for its part, called in the ambassadors of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council today to stress the gravity of the situation. Moroccan Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Laraki emphasized Morocco's determination to remain calm and not respond to provocations. Laraki said Morocco was not planning to call for a Security Council meeting at the present time, but he was clearly laying the groundwork for such a move if the situation grows worse.

Laraki claimed Moroccan forces on Tuesday had encountered an Algerian "garrison," not a supply convoy carrying medicine and food as the Algerian press had reported. He said the Moroccans had captured 29 Algerian soldiers.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

CHINA-ZAIRE-ANGOLA

Peking is apparently attempting to stiffen Zairian resolve on Angola.

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The Chinese enjoy close relations with President Mobutu and are undoubtedly dismayed by indications that he might seek an early accommodation with the Soviet-backed Angolan Popular Movement. The Chinese appear resigned to a Soviet success in Angola, but Peking probably wants Moscow to pay the price of enmity from some African governments as long as possible. In this sense, Peking's exhortations about the Soviet threat and Chinese offers of assistance to Zaire are probably designed to heighten Mobutu's fears about the implications of a Popular Movement victory and to signal China's willingness to help ease Zaire's economic problems.

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The Chinese were the target of a diatribe in the Cuban press on Tuesday, which suggests that Havana is determined to play a more aggressive role to undermine Chinese influence in the Third World.

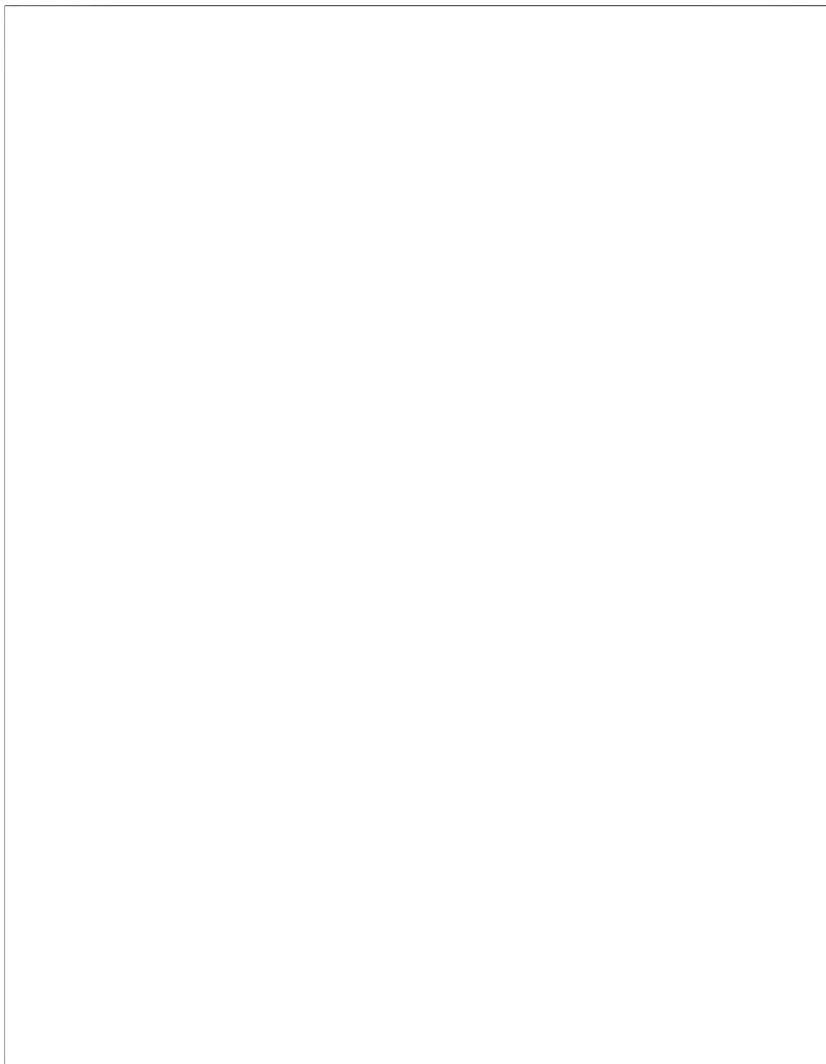
Although the attack is in line with recent Soviet propaganda, it is the most strident anti-Chinese message from Havana since 1966. It now seems likely that Havana's efforts to extend its and Moscow's influence in the Third World will be carried out more energetically and in a spirit of acknowledged confrontation with Peking.

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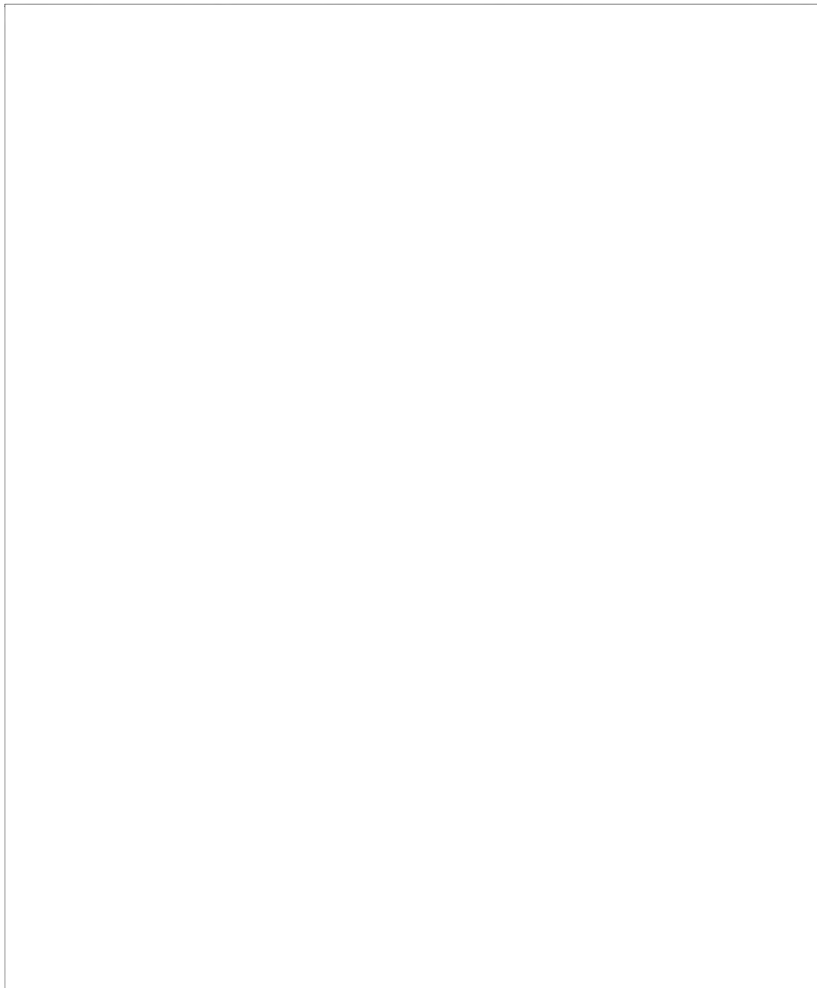
CUBA-ANGOLA



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LEBANON

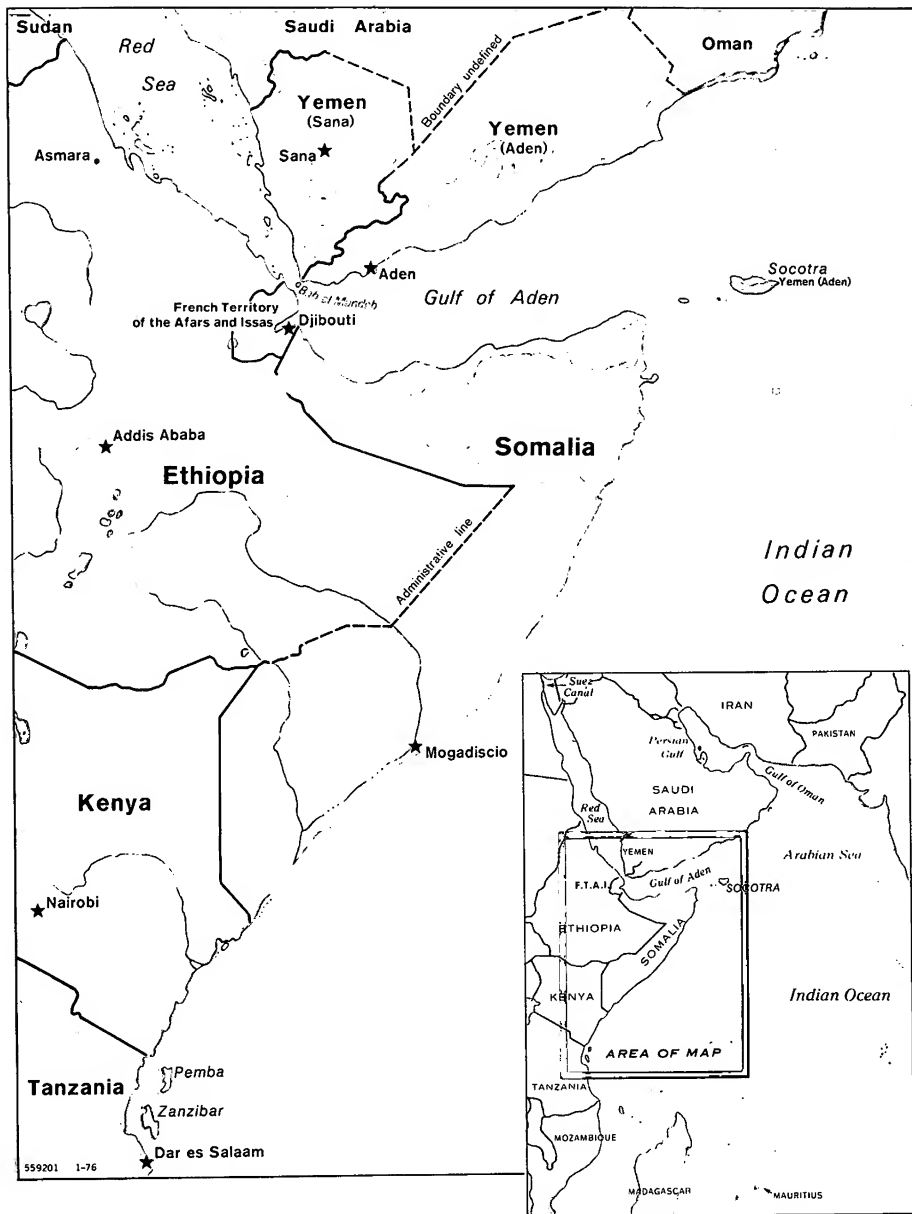
Lebanon's Christian leaders remain suspicious of Syria's intentions, despite repeated assurances from Foreign Minister Khaddam that Palestinian troops will be withdrawn to Syria as soon as order is restored.

Heavy concentrations of Syrian-controlled Palestinian forces in the Bekaa Valley in eastern Lebanon and recent attacks on a group of small Christian villages in the area are apparently the immediate cause for Christian concern. The official Lebanese news service admitted yesterday that a Christian town has been under attack for several days, but carefully avoided assigning blame for the trouble.

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Interior Minister Shamun referred to the trouble in eastern Lebanon in an interview yesterday, and implied that he would withhold approval of a final settlement until Syria recalled the Palestinian troops. Although Shamun may be overstating his reaction to the Palestinian presence in order to buy time in political negotiations, talk of Syrian "occupation" coupled with persistent cease-fire violations may erode confidence that a settlement can be reached.

An ambush yesterday of a Lebanese army escort that had accompanied Foreign Minister Khaddam to Syria on Tuesday will heighten Christian apprehension. The ambush was carried out by a group of Lebanese army deserters--presumably Muslims--who apparently have joined the Palestinian rejectionists.



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Cuban

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Somalia

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Cuban and Popular Movement troops transported by helicopters reportedly carried out assaults against National Union positions in central Angola last Monday and Tuesday. The troop-carrying helicopters were supported by helicopter gunships.

This is the first reported use of helicopters in such roles since the civil war began last year. The new development points to an acceleration of the Popular Movement's drive to take the urban areas held by the National Union. The airborne operation apparently has jolted National Union President Savimbi

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The Indonesians appear to have successfully stage-managed the visit of a UN fact-finding mission to Timor.

Following his return to Jakarta on January 22, Secretary General Waldheim's personal representative said that he had detected no sign of Indonesian military forces. He was impressed that the pro-Indonesian Timorese in Dili had the civil administration functioning. The Timorese assured the representative that they are now in control, and that they did not want any referendum on the island's future because they had already decided to integrate with Indonesia. In fact, fighting is continuing near the south coast of the island where the Indonesians are preparing to attack Fretilin resupply and escape routes.

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Yugoslav President Tito's illness is reportedly more serious than Belgrade has officially admitted.

A Yugoslav journalist who was to accompany the 83-year-old leader on a recently postponed tour of Latin America told the US ambassador that Tito is suffering from partial paralysis, and will need six to seven weeks to recover. Belgrade has said only that Tito is suffering from sciatica.

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[] The Soviet Kresta-II guided-missile cruiser has joined the landing ship in the Gulf of Guinea.

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